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DECISION

**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES**
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

FILE: B-196153

DATE: February 12, 1980

MATTER OF: Jerry L. Long - [Travel to seek Residence Quarters] ^{Expenses Incurred Seeking}

DIGEST: Employee may not be paid travel expenses for six house-hunting trips incident to permanent change of station, since law and regulations permit only one round trip. Maximum number of days for trip is six, which must be consecutive.

Mr. Joseph R. Ruland, Chief, Finance and Budget Branch, Federal Highway Administration, Region 8, asks whether Mr. Jerry L. Long may be paid \$422.63 travel expenses for six house-hunting trips incident to his permanent change of station between Denver, Colorado and Cheyenne, Wyoming. AC00063
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The issue is whether payment is authorized for house-hunting involving more than one round trip not on consecutive days.

Mr. Long and his wife made six house-hunting trips between Denver and Cheyenne on July 28, July 30, August 4, August 6, August 11, and August 18. The distance for each round trip ranged from 211 to 257 miles. They traveled by privately owned vehicle. Mr. Long's travel orders on a standard form had the following printed statement for item 14:

"You and/or spouse are authorized one round trip to new duty station to seek residence quarters, as follows:" (Emphasis added.)

The maximum number of days authorized under item 14A for "one round trip" was six, and the mode of travel designated in item 14B was privately owned vehicle. Mr. Long states that the requirement that the six days be consecutive first became known to him when he submitted his travel voucher dated August 31, 1979.

Mr. Long was authorized \$73.03 for the longest trip of 257 miles on August 18, including mileage, per diem, and telephone expenses. Travel expenses for the first five trips were denied.

Expenses of a house-hunting trip (travel to seek residence quarters) are authorized "for one round trip between the localities

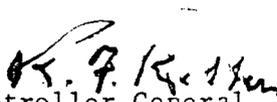
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of the old and new duty stations * * *." Paragraph 2-4.1a of the Federal Travel Regulations. The maximum number of days for the one trip is six under paragraph 2-4.2 of the FTR. Further, the implementing regulations of the Federal Highway Administration say: "The maximum period for this trip is six calendar days, roundtrip, including all travel time." Chapter 3, Employee Moving Assistance Handbook. The limitation to one round trip is necessary because Congress has provided that house-hunting expenses "may be allowed only for one round trip in connection with each change of station of the employee." 5 U.S.C. § 5724a(a)(2). Since only one round trip is payable, it necessarily follows that the maximum number of six calendar days must be in consecutive order. B-178441, June 18, 1973. Further, there is no authority to pay the cost of several trips not to exceed the constructive cost of one six-day trip. 47 Comp. Gen. 189 (1967); B-168829, March 11, 1970, October 23, 1979.

Mr. Long was authorized payment for one round trip, the maximum allowed. The printed material on the travel orders, as well as the legal authorities discussed above, placed Mr. Long on notice that he was limited to one trip.

Accordingly, Mr. Long may not be paid for six house-hunting trips.


Deputy Comptroller General
of the United States